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C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 000506

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: SINDH - SUKKUR CHURCH STILL SUFFERING CONSEQUENCES
OF ATTACK

Classified By: Classified by Consul General Kay Anske for reasons 1.4 b
and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: During a visit to Sukkur, in upper Sindh, the Consul General (CG) met with a Catholic priest on July 21 to ascertain the extent of reparations to his church after a mob burned it in a 2006 riot. The priest told the CG that promised provincial government assistance to rebuild the church was insufficient, due to a funding shortfall. As a result, his community is attempting to raise the funds independently. While the priest did not feel that the Islamic community held a significant bias against Christians on a day-to-day basis, violent sectarian incidents can occur rapidly in the region. End summary.

¶2. (C) During a July 21 meeting with the Consul General (CG) in the upper Sindh city of Sukkur, Father Yaqoob Gill, pastor of Saint Mary's Catholic Church, described efforts to repair the damage to the church caused by a February 19, 2006 riot, incited by claims of anti-Islamic activity by Christians, that also caused damage to St. Savior's Anglican Church on the same day.

¶3. (C) He said the provincial government had agreed to restore both churches, but had only partially completed renovation before funding dried up. Gill said the parish's 300 families had decided not to rely further on government funding, but to raise the necessary money themselves. (Note: Repairs to the less heavily damaged St. Savior's Anglican Church were started nearly one year before the repairs to St. Mary's Church. The CG met with the pastor of the Anglican Church and saw the state of its repairs on an earlier trip to Sukkur. End note.)

¶4. (C) Gill said that the Sindh provincial government had allocated 4.1 million rupees (approx USD 59 thousand) for repairs to both his church and the Anglican church. However, estimated repair costs for St. Mary's alone are around 7.2 million rupees (approx USD 103 thousand). The church is now covered by a tin roof and the walls still bear the signs of the fire that gutted it. Inside, the structure is empty, its stain glass windows) destroyed in the blaze) replaced by regular glass. Gill said the district government had done all the work on the structure to date without cooperation from the city government. (Note: All repairs to St. Mary's Church have occurred since the CG's visit to the district late last year, nearly two years after the riot. End note.)

¶5. (C) Gill noted that, overall, the Christian community has not experienced significant persecution by the area's Muslim majority, but did experience some problems after the Danish publication of cartoons lampooning the Prophet Mohammed. The Christian and Muslim communities have a long

history of interaction in Sukkur. For example, around 1,200 of the 1,400 students attending the church's parish school are Muslims.

¶16. (C) Comment: It is unusual for a government to step in and help build damaged religious institutions. The Sindh provincial government took the step to appease its Christian minority in the aftermath of the rioting. While Gill did not feel there is a constant threat to Christians in Sukkur, nor a pronounced anti-Christian government bias, the 2006 incident illustrates the general volatility in the region and the vulnerability of minorities living in the area.

Anske